

EATING AND THINKING.*

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DEAR Anita : There is certainly a close relation between the amount of wholesome food a pupil partakes of, the vigour and health of body, and the amount of mental work in the form of reading, writing, or arithmetic he is able to do. It is not the number of facts about history, geography, and grammar which a boy learns or has crammed into him that makes him happy and useful, but it is the facts which he knows how to use, and which he uses, that make him happy and mentally strong. Neither is it the food that he eats which benefits, but it is the food which he eats, digests, and assimilates that makes him physically strong.

The great importance of early sifting the wheat from the chaff, of training the youth to retain that knowledge which is useful, and allowing him to forget the worthless, is necessary, so that his mind will not be encumbered with information learnt only for examination purposes—as the digestive organs assimilate and use that aliment which is nutritious, and reject the unsuitable, so should the mind be trained to deal with mental pabulum.

As the brain is but a part of the body, in order that it should be healthy and active, it is essential that the body be kept vigorous and healthy.

“*Mens sana in corpore sano*,” a sound mind in a sound body, should be the aim of every educationist.

As a discussion of the laws which

govern the health of body would take us too far from the object of our paper, we shall discuss only some points of the subject of nourishment, as upon it in great measure the activity and vigour of the brain depend.

Blood is required to supply nourishment and energy needed for all work done by the body, whether such work be mental, physical, or vital.

During the time of elementary school life, between the ages of five and fifteen years, so much energy and nourishment is needed for growth of body and development of brain, which takes place at this time, that the youth has but a small surplus at its disposal for expending in mental work. If more than this small surplus is expended in mental labour, either body or brain must suffer; in consequence the youth becomes thin, pale, haggard, or the vigour and strength of intellect is impaired.

All energy in the first place is derived from the food with which we are nourished; how necessary, then, it is to keep our bodies strong and our digestive organs vigorous and healthy to provide nourishment that the brain may be abundantly supplied with the pure, rich blood needed for development and for energy required in mental work.

From the activity and the important functions performed by the brain, we are not surprised to find that it is copiously supplied with blood. Besides supplying the nerve force necessary for the purpose of thought, feeling, willing, and motion, the brain has also to expend very much energy in aiding and directing such vital processes as digestion, circulation, breathing, secretion, and other operations. In

* A letter from a practising physician to his niece Anita. Miss Anita is teaching the elementary classes at a school in Leon.